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Zwangendaba or Mputa. Some informants showed that there was not always agreement about the use of the terms *mabandla* and *mabuto* when relating stories of the past, and the connotation of age regiment was sometimes given to *mabandla*. Cibambo and the other Ngoni historians who used the Ngoni language habitually were, however, quite clear about the differentiation between the two terms, one being territorial and the other denoting an age group. This use of the term *libuto* was confirmed by Dr. Kuper in her account of Swazi military organization.[1]

The organization of Ngoni warfare included the use of divining and of medicines to ensure success in war, and the summoning of the men charged to carry out these functions. In both Ngoni kingdoms there were men alive at the time of my visits who knew the medicines for war and had performed the functions of a 'war-medicine doctor'. According to these informants there was no sharp division between the functions of the diviner and the 'doctor' in relation to their services to the kingdom and to the army. There were individuals who had acted in both capacities. The diviner's task was to prophesy about probable success in war and about attacks from the enemy. He might, and sometimes did, combine this with 'doctoring' the army.

The preparation and administering of medicines to strengthen the army were discussed by informants in terms of two main types of medicine and a third which was less often referred to. The two main types were *intonga* and *intelezi* and the third one *inkhuza*. In the northern kingdom Mopo Jere, who had been a 'war doctor' and was the son of a former famous 'war doctor', insisted that the term *intonga* could be used in several different ways: for medicines made of roots; for a rod or stick (*ndulu*) which was medicated; and occasionally for the 'doctor' who used these objects. He also emphasized that each chief or subchief had his own *intonga* and performed ceremonies for his own warriors before they left his kraal for that of the Paramount, where they went through another ceremony of having medicines administered to them before going on the campaign.

Formerly the *intonga*, that is, the stick or rod, was treated with the root of a shrub ground up and mixed with water. A beast was then killed, the Paramount ate the meat in the kraal with his senior men, and the skin was made into a bag in which the medicated *intonga* was placed. This skin bag containing the *intonga* was carried in front of the army when it was on the march. It could only be carried and handled when with the army by boys who had not yet reached puberty. The *intonga* in its bag was pointed at the enemy, as the army drew near, to make his warriors tremble and feel powerless and take to their heels. Its potency to make men powerless was so strong that no man from the Ngoni army dared walk in front of it, lest he too should lose all his strength.

[1] Kuper, H. 'The Development of the Military Organization in Swaziland' *Africa*, Vol. X, No. 4, p. 176.

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643 so briefly referred to was in the nature of a warning that the kingdom must be held together and certain Ngoni customs and institutions preserved. This general mandate to a new Paramount was in keeping with the Ngoni policy of maintaining order and justice within the kingdom, while showing all the aggressive qualities of warfare against external enemies.

173 643 In the story of their northward trek, the division of authority among the central Ngoni between the Maseko and the Phungwako clans was referred to as the Maseko taking the '*Bayete*' and the Phungwako taking the *tonga*.[1] In central Ngoniland the *tonga* was a collective name given to royal medicines used at different times for different purposes and was not reserved for the medicine used in the army as in the northern kingdom. It was said to have been 'from the beginning in the south'; 'it is very old, ever since people were born'. The following description was given by a member of the Phungwako clan in the head village of Chief Kacere:

643 789 ¶ The Ngoni had protection for all their people of the most powerful kind. This was the *tonga*. This was specially to protect the Paramount at his accession. When the Ngoni were thus accustomed to being protected by the *tonga*, there was one thing which gave them protection above others. If the Paramount died, in arranging matters, the *tonga* was essential in establishing the new Paramount. And if war had to be made, the *tonga* also gave protection so that they had strength to overcome their enemies.

[741] Also when the Ngoni were travelling in wild places and did not find somewhere to stay, they began to listen to the *tonga*. The diviner, who went ahead with the *tonga*, looked to see if there were bad omens. When they found a place to stay and stayed there with their cattle, they were protected by the *tonga*, so that they were not afraid of anything. They just conquered the country and took the cattle and made the people surrender.

[825] When getting ready the *tonga*, they could only do it with a sheep. They killed it, and took its blood and its fat and smeared the *tonga*. And the big people who were set aside for the work of the *tonga*, it was they who were doing these things. The meat of the sheep which was killed for the *tonga*, they did not eat it just anyhow, no. They were eating it in a special way, not in the house, no; nor with the women, no; but in a very different way from the meat of every day. They ate it without being greedy when it was divided, and they took care not to put some aside, for they feared lest someone should eat the *tonga*. They just ate to finish it quickly, and when they had finished they did not sleep in their houses with their wives, but they went apart and slept in the place where this was done for the *tonga*. Their sleeping was different from other days, for they did not sleep on good mats, no. When they had eaten meat for the *tonga* they changed their ways, to act differently from usual. Instead of

[1] The head of the Phungwako clan, Chief Kacere, ruled one of the Ngoni states in the Dedza district which, in the 1930's, was separate from the central Ngoni kingdom.

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Manga. It was a time of great emotional tension and strain, and the absurdities of the jester relieved the solemnity and formality of the visit. This jester was said by informants to be a man of the Moyo clan, who owed his position not to hereditary right but to a ready and witty tongue.

The death of the Paramount

It is in the ceremonies at the death of the Paramount that we find some major differences between the traditional practices of the northern and central Ngoni peoples, which might be attributed to the separate groups in Natal from which they came. I was living in Mcakatha village in the central kingdom at the time of the sickness and death of Bambo Manga, the most important of the royal women among the central Ngoni. The ritual ceremonies at her funeral were said to be almost identical with those at the death of the Paramount, and I was able to check details of similarity and difference with old men who remembered the death of Cikusi, the last Ngoni Paramount in the central kingdom for whom the full ritual was carried out. I was not able after that to pursue further possible parallels and differences among the northern Ngoni. My general impression from informants was that among the northern Ngoni the ritual at the death of a Paramount differed from that of any other prominent man only in certain details of the period and form of mourning. Among the central Ngoni, as Rattray said in a note on the text which will be given, 'such funerals were more of a military pageant than anything else. All outward signs of grief were rigorously excluded.' I can confirm that from my observations at the death of Bambo Manga.

When the Paramount became ill, a diviner was called to give advice. He might advise that a sacrifice should be made to the ancestor spirits. He might suggest witchcraft as the cause of illness. He might advise calling in a man to give medicine to the Paramount. When, in spite of sacrifices and treatment, the Paramount died, the announcement was made from the edge of his village: *Izulu lidilikile*, 'the heaven has fallen down'. Messengers were sent to all the chiefs and to all the *abumumane* and other leading men. From the edge of each central village the cry was made, and each chief and *mabumumane* sent his messengers to make the same announcement in each of the villages under him.

Among the northern Ngoni the actual ceremony of burial does not appear to have been very different from that of any other important man, with one exception, that the Paramount, like other ruling Jere chiefs, was buried at the edge of the cattle kraal in a circular pit of the kind used when digging clay for mudding houses, on one side of which there was a niche where the corpse was placed in a sitting position, facing south-east. This burying in a circular grave on the edge of the kraal was the procedure which I witnessed at the burial of Bambo Manga among the central Ngoni (see below p. 75).

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769 425 787 In another part of the cult cattle played a still more direct part. When a diviner advised that prayer should be made to the spirit of a leading man on behalf of someone of his clan who was sick, the man who was in charge of the *gogo* section of the village informed the head of the clan or *banja* and they agreed to address the spirits, and to offer a sacrifice if the spirits were willing. The sign of willingness on the part of the spirits was for the selected beast, when it had been driven out of the kraal, to urinate or make dung. If either happened they said the spirit was willing, and arranged a time for the prayer and sacrifice. If neither happened, if the beast just stood still or lay down, the spirits had 'refused' and the sacrifice could not go forward. This sign or lack of sign by the beast could not be ignored, and was a further illustration that the Ngoni considered cattle to be essential as a medium of approach to the spirits of their ancestors.

When the beast 'refused', those responsible called the diviner again and asked for an explanation. He produced a reason and advised them to try again, and the process was repeated until the sign of agreement was given. There was always anxiety when the beast 'refused', partly because of the delay in sacrificing and partly owing to an uneasy feeling that they had left something undone and the ancestral spirit was not pleased with them.

The main part of the ritual of sacrifice to an ancestral spirit was killing the beast, offering the meat to the spirits and the eating of the meat by the principal persons concerned. This we shall examine more closely in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER III

THE ROLE OF THE DIVINER IN THE ANCESTOR CULT

● 791 769 It has been apparent in the chapters on the Paramount and on warfare in Part II, and in the two previous chapters of Part IV, that divining by an accredited person was a necessary preliminary for sacrificing to and addressing the ancestors.[1] I never heard or received any account of the ancestor cult in which divining was not specifically mentioned as the first step in the performance of the ritual. Moreover, all the diviners of good standing were themselves operating because they had contact with and were possessed by the spirit of an ancestor. By virtue of this direct contact with the spirit world the diviners claimed their special powers.

[1] The one possible exception was the first-fruits ceremony, but this had been given up before the Ngoni settled in Nyasaland, and the old men had no clear memories of the ritual followed.

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Dr. Kuper called the diviners among the Swazi 'the most powerful and respected specialists operating in both individual and national situations'.[1] I found that among the Ngoni also they were greatly respected once they had established their reputation for prophecy and diagnosis. Except on the occasions when they were called upon to carry out their functions the majority of diviners whom I saw in the 1930's lived in relative seclusion, and had no outward signs of power in any political or economic sense, though in the past some of the 'prophets' had also been warriors and leaders. Socially they were always shown great honour when they came in response to a call, or when they went visiting on non-professional occasions. They were addressed in a respectful tone of voice, given a mat to sit on, and village noises around them were hushed. They were, however, essentially recluses, withdrawn from public life except when they were called on to help in time of crisis, and they did not show any ostentation of wealth or position.

Dr. Kuper used the term 'specialist' to describe the diviners among the Swazi. In the Ngoni kingdoms there were many kinds of specialists owing to the existence of several tribal groups each with its traditional system of religion and magic, and each with varying methods of treating sickness, diagnosing the causes of misfortune, and interpreting omens and dreams. The diviners in the Ngoni kingdoms who were best known and on whom the greatest responsibility lay were those who were called by the Paramount in times of national crisis. Such responsibility and such fame had in pre-European days corresponding risks. The following story, which was told me in Hoho by Timoti Jere and which I heard quoted in several areas in the northern kingdom, puts in a traditional setting and with much circumstantial detail the kind of demands formerly made on diviners and the kind of treatment meted out to them:

'Zwangendaba in his coming out of South Africa arrived in the country of the Maculo at Mabiri. It is there now. When the *impi* was summoned it went out to contend for the country of the Sukuma. That *impi* wanted very much to be victorious, because it went to fight in two countries, in that of the Sukuma, where they took the long-horned cattle, and in that of the Ngonde, where they took the cattle without horns and with big humps. While the *impi* was away, the Paramount called all the *isinduna* and said 'Why has the *impi* delayed so long? Call the *isanusi* that they may divine. Perhaps the *impi* has run away and turned back.' Then the *isinduna* called the *isanusi*. In their divining they said 'The *impi* has run away and turned back.' There was one *isanusi*, his name was UMakhenda Nkosi, who divined and said 'All the *impi* is there and it will return in this month. The long delay of the *impi* is because they have raided two countries, the country of the Sukuma with long-horned cattle and the country of the Ngonde with unhorned cattle.' It was so, and that month the *impi* returned and arrived at Mabiri with many herds of cattle as UMakhenda Nkosi had said.

[1] Kuper, H. *op. cit.*, p. 163.

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173 791 After one year Zwangendaba called again all the *izinduna* and said 'Let us test all those *isanusi* in their divining.' So they spoke together secretly and said 'Let us take a goat and kill it, and take its blood, and let us sprinkle it on the doorways of the huts and on the posts of the doorways.' The *izinduna* agreed and no man knew of it. So they took a goat and stabbed its throat and when the blood came out they received it in the *sgwembe*, and then sprinkled it on the doorways and the posts of the huts in the enclosure of the Paramount. They did this at night and returned to their huts and slept.

When it was dawn, all the people were astonished at seeing blood on the doorways of the Paramount's huts. The people told the *izinduna* and the *izinduna* told the Paramount. He said 'Call the *isanusi* that they may divine.' They called all the *isanusi* and they divined together and they said, 'That blood is of man. There are flesh eaters here. They are striving that you O Paramount may die.' There was one *isanusi* UMakhende Nkosi who divined alone, and he said 'O Paramount the blood is of a goat. You, together with the *izinduna*, are proving us as *isanusi*. It is you O Paramount and the *izinduna* who have done this thing.' So the Paramount agreed. He commanded the *izinduna* and said 'Kill all the *isanusi* except UMakhende only.' All the *isanusi* were killed in this way by Paramount Zwangendaba at Mabiri.

791 The moral of this traditional story, as the Ngoni always pointed out when relating it, was that diviners could be wrong. The specialized skill which they claimed to possess carried with it a recognized responsibility for using it correctly and not deceiving the people who consulted them. There was also a suggestion in the story of the contempt for this kind of skill shown by leaders who possessed great political and military power. Hard-headed chiefs and army leaders in the past expected efficiency in their diviners, and punished them severely for ineptness and what appeared as deceit. This veiled contempt, associated as it was with the tacit admission that the diviner as a specialist could not be dispensed with in Ngoni life, appeared often in the 1930's when Ngoni leaders were talking about divining and were planning to have recourse to it. As in this story, they were ready to recognize authentic diagnosis when they heard it, but not to regard the diviners as a class as infallible. One of the reasons for this view about divining was the wide range of social background and the diversity of functions among the diviners. The following account by Cibambo suggests that two categories of diviners were recognized by the Ngoni and indicates certain Ngoni attitudes towards their range of operations and the way in which they carried them out. The account refers to pre-European days, and there was in the 1930's little evidence of these distinctions between types of diviners.

'There were men who acted as go-betweens between the spirits and the people called *isanusi*. Just as in the days of the Jews there were true and false prophets, so it was among the Ngoni. It is going too far, indeed it is

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untrue, to say that all the prophets were false. Some were true go-betweens between the land of the spirits and the land of men. They received in dreams, sometimes in visions, things that related to the people of their time. God himself agreed to make them his workers and messengers even though these men sought for him in twisty ways. 791

The real go-betweens or prophets were called *izanusi*, 'those who smell something', and *abantu benhloko*, 'people of the head, people of dreams'. These men were considered to meet with the spirits in dreams or by their medicines which lifted them up to see the things of the spirit land. The people thought that these men received news from the spirits which they were to give to the earth people.

These men who had the gift of seeing in dreams were not allowed to live in big villages where there were often noises, but the chiefs sent them out to build for themselves a little distance from the chief's village along with their family. They were afraid that people would be disturbing them and making a noise when they met with the spirits. They were also afraid that in the big villages there would be many people who did not walk in an orderly way, and so these men, meeting those people, would spoil their own good sense.

These men did not talk with the spirits all the time. Often they did not receive any messages, but on other days their heads were stirred up and they spoke.

In the central kingdom there had been in the past the same distinction mentioned by Cibambo between diviners who dreamed, and those who used medicines to smell before giving their message. Informants said that there was also a distinction between those who took the initiative in announcing that they had something to say, and those who waited to be called for consultation. In pre-European days, in the hierarchy of diviners, the highest esteem was given to those who dreamed only (*abantu benhloko*) and who announced as a result of their dreams that they had something of importance to tell the Paramount. The Msecko line of Paramounts had, in the days of Mputa, a famous woman diviner called NaNdumbu who was of a Swazi clan. She went north to Tanganyika with the Paramount Mputa and was regarded as the *izanusi* for the whole country who foretold events as a result of her dreams. An informant who had seen her described her after she had had a dream or a vision coming into the *lwalo*, the open space in front of the Paramount's hut, and dancing with the little stick which the women carry in the *umuinalo* dance. When the Paramount saw her dancing thus he came out to her and she spoke with him alone, telling him of her dream. Then, when the people around were silent, she lifted up her stick high with an outstretched arm, and the Paramount told the people what she had told him, and when they heard it they knocked their sticks on the ground and said '*e e e e*'. After she died her brother took her place as *izanusi*, and his daughter was living in Mzakhatha when I was there. This woman said of her father 'When I was young they told me "Your father has become [554]

an *isanusi* today". When he entered the place of his sister, NaNdumbu, he was dreaming. If there was a war he could say "You must not go to that war because all the people will be killed." He was just dreaming and dancing his *isanusi* dance. When he danced that dance on the chief's *bwalo* the people praised him with special praises.'

Two informants remembered fragments of the songs sung by NaNdumbu and her brother, and these songs were also sung by the old *isanusi* in the northern kingdom. I give here the Ngoni versions with an English translation, omitting the repetition of lines and the 'sounds' which accompanied the singing:

Uyezwe nikhlolo	Do you see the omens?
Inkanyezo ipuma	The star comes out,
Ipuma yanga	It comes out in the East.
. . . . .	
Ubaba uyangibiza	My father is calling me.
Hamba ekaya	Go home.
Indaba zikuyandela	Things have turned against you,
Hamba ekaya	Go home.

Although these diviners acted at times on their own initiative, this did not prevent their being called on in time of crisis to diagnose the reason for disaster or sickness. *Isanusi* who used their own medicines to smell could prophesy and speak on their own initiative as well as waiting to be called on. These medicines were said to induce the dreams on which the prophecy was based, and they were generally contained in the tail of a gnu or in a sheep's horn, or some other horn.

Below this category of the prophets, whether *abantu bokhlolo* or *isanusi*, came those who used lots when called on to diagnose a particular situation. These were often men who dreamed, or who used their own medicines to receive messages from their ancestral spirits, but instead of announcing their message directly, they brought with them some form of lots which they used when they were consulted, and gave their diagnosis as a result of observing the lots. Sometimes they sang their own songs, accompanied by dancing, which led to an almost trance-like condition; sometimes they used their lots without any previous working up of an emotional state through song or dance. I never met any of the dreamer type of prophet who used no medicines and no lots. There was general agreement among the Ngoni that they had died out, that their main service had been in times of war, and that the number of men or women who possessed such powers had, even in the past, been very small indeed. I did, however, see one diviner at work who used the song and dance technique with the lots, and two who used the lots without song or dance.

The *isanusi* whom I saw in the northern kingdom was divining for sickness at the request of a party of people who had come to consult him

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about a sick relative. He asked for a preliminary payment in cash from me before he would say anything in front of me, having already received the customary present of fowls from the sick man's relatives. There was an atmosphere of part pantomime, part reluctant performance in front of a stranger whose presence seemed to trouble him more than it did his clients. He wore a python-skin cap with beads dangling from it, and carried the tail of a black cow bound with lead and a small skin bag with the lots in it. At first he sat holding the tail in his hands and sniffing it occasionally. Then he suddenly shook the lots out of the bag—six large beans called *kalowo* and about twenty small round nuts called *mupi*. He put snuff on the top of each bean, sprinkled snuff on the nuts, picked the nuts up in both hands, shook his hands together and threw the nuts on the ground. Some fell near the big beans, others rolled between them. He looked intently at them, then at the group waiting to consult him. 'There is someone who is sick,' he said to them and the group replied '*Siyavuma*' (we agree). They continued to chant *siyavuma* in a low tone over and over again, with an almost mesmeric effect. He meantime went on to describe the sickness, that it was a pain inside the man (the chanting was loud), that it had been on the right side (less response), in the stomach (less response), on the left side (loud response). At intervals he waved the tail in the air and knocked the leaded end on the ground to emphasize the louder response. He did not specify the complaint but advised the people consulting him to go home and kill a goat as a sacrifice to their ancestors, and give the sick man some medicines which he would sell them.

It may have been the mixture of a real consultation with my visit which produced his slightly mountebank performance, and it may also have been his combination of the role of diviner with peddling medicines which the people present for the consultation evidently expected to obtain from him. This aspect of his performance impressed itself on the Ngoni informant who was with me. He was slightly contemptuous throughout, even when the songs were being sung and taken down. He kept on muttering 'This is Nsenga,' and said afterwards as we were going away that this diviner worked only for ordinary people and their sickness, as witnessed by his telling them to sacrifice a goat, and that he would not have been acknowledged by the real Ngoni. He was making comparisons all the time between the 'people of the head' and the diviners of this type, illustrating the Ngoni esteem for the real dreamers, and the slight, sometimes great, contempt for those who combined divining with recommending medicines as remedies.

The contrast between the performance of this diviner and that of the two *tsunsi* whom I saw at work in the central kingdom was considerable. My long residence in Mzikhatha and the entrée I had to all that was taking place in connexion with the sickness of Bambo Mangu no doubt helped to give confidence to the diviners. The chief and his

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123 brother arranged for first one *isanusi* and then, when he became ill, for
•791 another to come and see me. In each case they concluded that I was consulting them and foretold what would happen and gave me advice, warning and assurance. There was great seriousness of purpose and no mountebank atmosphere, even though they came to the courtyard of my hut and saw round them all the paraphernalia of a European's camping equipment.

791 The first diviner, who was of a Venda clan, was a very old man and greatly respected and trusted by the Nzunga clan, who were looking after Bumbo Manga in Mzakhatha and who had called him several times to divine for them during her illness. His story was that he was the son of an *isanusi* and when the signs of his initiation began to appear before he reached puberty, his father recognised the fainting and the pain and refusal to eat, and said 'This child will be a diviner also.' The spirit who came to him in dreams was his father's father who had died south of the Zambesi, where his father had been born.

This man was very definite about the kind of situations for which he could and would divine and the type of advice he would give. Questioned further on this point, he gave in this order: sickness, journeys, suspicious days for holding an epoma dance or a hunt, 'absent treatment' of relatives in trouble in the south asked for by letter, sickness of cattle, moving a village to a new site. He refused contemptuously any divining about stealing or death, or agricultural practices such as choosing new gardens or beginning cultivation. Neither he nor the people with him made any specific reference to the different rules of an *isanusi* among the Ngoni and the local Cewa and other tribes, but since they used the same terms for divining, *kuombwa mundo* (to throw the lots), they were careful to point out what the Ngoni diviners *did not* do. In the case of sickness due
[755] to 'spirits troubling', of suspicious days for journeys and other events, of cattle sickness, of moving villages, his invariable advice was to sacrifice a beast to the spirits. Most of the inquiries addressed to him were about sickness. When such an inquiry came to him in his village, he smelled his medicines and asked of *his* ancestral spirit 'Is the man likely to live or not? Who is troubling him? What shall he do?'

787 The first occasion on which I saw him divine was in the hut of a
791 widow of the former chief, Njakomoko I, which had been newly swept and a new fire made. The chief and his uncle sat on either side of the fire, the diviner on the right-hand side of the door and I on the left on the woman's side. The diviner was told to begin. He pulled out his stilo, the stem of a gourd, which was wrapped in bark and cloth and had inside it the medicine, and which was waxed at each end. He scraped bits of the stilo root into a pot with a little water in it. He put the stilo in the water for a moment and then took it out and rubbed it in his hands. He put it under a flat fiscal basket and swept his hand over the top of the basket once or twice before putting the pot on top. He gazed

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into the pot, which he kept turning with his right hand, and he murmured in a low voice from time to time, and shook his head. The only words which were audible were '*Inu tawverami*', 'You, please listen.' After three minutes he tried to lift the pot, but it seemed to stick to the basket. All this time he was very calm and unexcited, though the pot appeared to stick every time. Finally he said the spirits of the Maseko chiefs were not willing for a sacrifice to be made. The reason, he said, was that I was there and they were afraid of a white face, because the Europeans had killed Gomani I and the spirits 'were ashamed' before white people. The following day the lots were tried again when I was not present and the spirits gave the diviner the sign that they agreed to the sacrifice.

About three weeks later, at the suggestion of the head of the *gugo* house in the village, he came to see me, having been asked to tell me about his initiation. He treated the call as a genuine summons to a consultation, however, and performed for me the ritual I had seen him carry out in the hut. This time he consulted the spirits of his father and grandfather. I had made no specific inquiry of him, but he asked his spirits for advice about my movements, whether I should go or stay, addressing them with '*Tawverami*', 'Please listen.' The pot came off the basket after the second effort and he looked at the bits of *nsiku* root as they floated inside. Then he looked up at me and said 'You must not leave here. Perhaps you were thinking of returning to the Paramount's village. You should not do this because my spirits tell me that the spirits here want you to stay.'

When this old diviner became ill, another one of an Nyumba clan was called to Mzakhatha to divine about the illness of one of the leading women. His father had also been a diviner, a dreamer who did not dance or throw lots for sickness, but told of things to come, especially about war. His father had been in the Tengo country in Songea with Mputa and had spoken Ngoni there, and the spirit of his father's father was the one who came to him at his initiation as a young man. His equipment and technique were slightly different from those of the former diviner. He had a small duiker horn which had medicine inside it of the *cinsumbalome* tree roots and, like the *ntibo*, was waxed at the end and rounded so that it could swivel on its base. At first he smelled the horn and made deep belching noises, almost like retching. He put the horn in an empty gourd cup, waxed end down, and left it by his left thigh. Out of a skin bag he took ten small half-shells of nuts, four large and six small, which he said he got from the Venda people. They were called *nkhlobo*. He arranged them face down in front of him, the larger ones in the middle. He gathered them up again, smelled them, belched and threw them down. Five fell face down and five face up. He picked them up and threw them five times until they fell in the position he wanted, muttering as he did so '*ai, ai*' (no, no), and finally '*akondwera*' (they are happy).

787 He left the shells, picked up a small rattle, a little gourd with stones in
791 it, and knocked it on his knees. Meantime he picked up the gourd with the horn in it, and held it on the palm of his left hand with the base resting on his extended fingers. The horn rocked on its base inside the gourd and came to rest, touching one edge of the gourd or another and sometimes standing erect without touching the rim of the gourd. During this part he was much disturbed and sweat ran down his face while he murmured to his spirits '*Nanga inu*' (What are you doing?), '*Mukodza ndithu*' (You are surely lying), '*Ai ai ndikudi*' (No, no truly). Finally the horn came to rest against the rim of the gourd towards him, and he put it down, and wiped his forehead. Then he said to me 'You will be ill, but you will recover. You will not die in this country. So do not fear. You will not die'.[1]

During the rocking of the horn in the gourd the diviner was listening to and speaking to his spirits. His obvious distress at first, and his subsequent relief were genuine and onlookers said that with this man such swaying of fortunes, through appeal to his spirits, often took place. He was considered a very powerful diviner, in that he could argue with the spirits and did not depend only on what the lots said or take them as the final word. His combination of the use of the medicated horn with the throwing of lots was considered a sign of power. He said himself that he always knew the day before when a man was coming to consult him about someone who was ill and that night he dreamed and his spirits told him what to say.

791 Several references have been made to the initiation of a diviner, which was an essential preparation for his role, and an experience which marked him out as different from other men. Both the diviners whom I saw at work in the central kingdom gave short accounts of what happened before they became diviners. In the first (*a*) that of the very old man, most emphasis was laid on the finding and preparing of the medicines. In the second (*b*) the emphasis was on the re-birth element of the initiation, denoted by the expression *ukutwasa* which was used for the reappearance of the new moon after the period of darkness.

(*a*) When I began to divine I slept, and in the night I dreamed dreams, and they said go and fetch a tree, its name is *nsiku*, and when you have done so take the handle of a gourd and put some of the *nsiku* inside, and shut each end of the handle with wax and on the wax put beads. Find a pot and pour water in it and put in pieces of *nsiku* bark. Take that handle and put it on the ground and cover it with an *nsungwa* and put the pot on top and what you say will be true.

They told me just to go anywhere to find that tree. These dreams came to me when I was a young man. After these dreams I was very ill, near to death, and another thing I had pains in my heart; and my mother and my father thought I was dead.

[1] This prophecy was remembered by the people and often quoted when two weeks later I was attacked by a swarm of wild bees and nearly died.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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(b) At first I died and when I rose up again I felt the wind of the spirits. My dying was my initiation. This ukutwasa was like that of the moon when it is new. I began to speak and speak and I danced with the python skin on my head. Then the people tested me whether I had bad or good spirits and after that I began to divine. The spirit of my grandfather, he has told me about this work. I am talking with his spirit when the horn is going round.

The fact of my being in Mzakhatha during the illness and death of Bambo Manga, and witnessing all the attendant ritual, gave me many opportunities of discussing the role of diviners in the ancestor cult, as well as of observing two of them at work. No such opportunity presented itself in the northern kingdom, but the role of the diviner was very fully discussed with leading Ngoni in Ekwendeni, Enondweni and Hoho, and the account given by Cibambo at the beginning of this chapter was partly the result of these talks.

I have made several references to the graded hierarchy among the diviners, though I have not made any connexion between those diviners who either prophesied or made a diagnosis and those others, whether they were called *isanusi* or *isinyanga*, who made a diagnosis and also gave treatment through medicines. I have limited the analysis here to the diviners who operated through their own ancestral spirits and who, by virtue of this contact of theirs, claimed to be able to interpret the will of the ancestral spirits of the Ngoni clans. It was a notable fact that very few of the famous diviners, and none of the less well-known, were of Swazi clans, though the one true prophet in the story of the slaughter at Mahiri was of a Swazi clan. Two great *isinduna* and *ukumkasa*, who were also dreamers and prophets, Gwaza Jere in the north and Goloseka Nxunga in the central kingdom, were of Swazi clans. So also was the famous woman diviner NaNdumbu. It appeared that the capacity to become a diviner and the successful practice of the art was very unusual among the leading Ngoni. They depended therefore on men of lesser trans-Zambesi and cis-Zambesi clans to perform these duties for them. The attitude shown by leading Ngoni towards the diviners, already referred to, may have been partly a rationalization of their dependence on this kind of skill as well as on force of arms. It may also have been due to the necessity, admitted somewhat reluctantly, of using men of lower social status, that is of cis-Zambesi clans, for such vital services to the nation and to their own families. The Ngoni had a strong pragmatic streak which led them to suspect knowledge and skill which could not be reduced to concrete terms, and hence they were always ready to accuse the less well accredited diviners of lying and deceit.

In spite of Ngoni doubts and suspicions about the class of diviners as a whole, within their kingdoms these persons were recognized as specialists for certain reasons. They had all been through the experience described as ukutwasa. It began with physical symptoms, such as fainting,

lack of appetite, forgetfulness, sweating. These manifestations could take place in childhood, around puberty, or when the man was fully grown, though the most usual age was in the late teens. The symptoms culminated in sharp pains and a prolonged collapse, and after that a deep sleep. It was then that the dreams came giving the man the assurance that he was henceforth a medium, and that through the spirit of his grandfather, or whoever was now appearing to him, he could communicate with the spirit world. At this time also he was told in dreams where to find medicines and what to do with them. A constant feature in the initiation of well known and accredited diviners was that they knew the name and identity of the spirit with whom they were in contact, and it appeared to be always someone related to them and most often their father's father.

As they returned to normality from an experience which was frightening in its intensity, it dawned on them that they now had to practise as a diviner, to make use of the powers which had come to them. There was evidence that they accepted this role with reluctance. Their relatives, when they saw them going through the earlier stages, were aware that there was an inevitable sequel, that of practising as a diviner, and they too shared the reluctance of the man himself. Sometimes a diviner began to practise by associating as a junior partner with a successful practitioner; sometimes he began hesitantly by himself. The criterion of the validity of their calling was their success. No one seemed to know what became of diviners who were unsuccessful and never became accredited. They apparently disappeared from the field because no one employed them.

The diviners whom I met and talked with, as well as those few whom I saw practising their calling, were considered by the Ngoni to possess a distinctive temperament. It was evident that they wished to live somewhat apart, and that they were withdrawn in a social as well as in a spatial sense. They married, but usually only one wife, and had children, but played little part in extended family or village affairs. Their huts were always on the outskirts of villages and were neither large and prosperous nor very poor looking. They had a reputation for being unpunctual and forgetful, but they were far from being unobservant. Part of their skill lay in watching people and learning about their concerns from observation and storing events in a good memory. Though they could work themselves up into emotionally excited states during a consultation, at other times they gave the impression of being controlled, rather quiet, detached, and uninfluenced by the currents of talk and opinion around them.

The rewards for their services were in kind as a rule, and could be articles of household equipment, food, cloth, and sometimes European clothes or goods from the stores, such as lanterns, soap, matches and cigarettes. There appeared to be no bargaining over payment. The

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goods were handed over, the diviner thanked the giver in the customary manner, and his wife or child carried the gifts away. Informants said that leading Ngoni would never be mean in their payments to diviners, and that diviners of the upper grades would never bargain over their rewards. It was openly said that a leading diviner cared most for his reputation as a successful specialist, and that the kind of life he led and the sort of man he was did not induce a desire to be wealthy.

One aspect of the diviner's role among the Ngoni was that he, an individualist, was always summoned at the request of a group. In a case of sickness of one of its members, it was the family or the senior men of a house who summoned the diviner, and they gave him his reward and carried out his advice. When a family heard from the diviner that a sick member might recover if a sacrifice were made to their ancestors, they regarded the diviner, in Cibambo's phrase, as a go-between linking the living group and their dead ancestors. The diviner therefore, like the cattle, was an essential link in the relationship between the living and the dead.

CHAPTER IV

THE RITUAL OF ADDRESSING THE ANCESTRAL SPIRITS

In the course of the first three chapters of this section, and in earlier sections, many beliefs and practices have been discussed which bear on the ritual of the ancestor cult. In spite of the risk of some repetition it will be useful to bring together here in one chapter the main elements in the ritual, and in so doing to raise certain theoretical issues.

Dr. Kuper said[1] that among the Swazi, ancestor spirits were not worshipped, and she gave as the reasons for this statement that the spirits were addressed as living persons would be, being sometimes scolded and seldom thanked, and that indignation rather than humility was the attitude of the living when disasters befell them which might have been due to malice or carelessness on the part of the ancestors. Without entering into an argument on the nature of worship and its essential accompaniments, I would state that certain aspects of the Ngoni ancestor cult showed those features which are usually considered to be part of a people's worship. These were sacrifice, prayer, and purification, which, not necessarily in that order, were the main elements in the cult. There was, moreover, a connexion between the ancestor cult and ethical behaviour in Ngoni thinking. The guardianship of an ancestral spirit, involving much respect for the house to

[1] Kuper, H. *op. cit.*, p. 192.

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
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schools, in sermons by Ngoni ministers in the churches. Fathers gathered their children together, boys and girls, on such occasions, and said to them: 'Listen. Do you hear? This is about our people from the beginning. Remember well. Do not forget, for the Ngoni cannot forget their past.'

A young man of about twenty related to me how his father, the head of a leading clan, used to talk to him about the Ngoni past when they went on hunting trips together on Mount Choma, where Paramount Mbelwa and his Ngoni had first settled in Northern Nyasaland. In among the dry grass the father showed the boy the sites of former villages, the polished floors and the sturdy door-posts of the huts, and the stumps of the kraal fences. He heard in that historical setting the story of one of the famous secessions from the main Ngoni kingdom. 'Early one morning,' said his father, 'we woke up, we who remained, and we saw that Ciwere had gone. All the people shouted "Ciwere has separated from us. He has separated indeed. Our Paramount is poor because of his departure."'

It was largely through their own efforts that the Ngoni succeeded in teaching their history to their children in the schools. More than one Ngoni leader who had been educated by the Scottish Mission began writing the history of his own people, and in their villages I found several young men recording in writing the traditions as told them by their grandfathers. One Ngoni minister, Rev. Y. M. Cibambo, for twenty years systematically recorded and checked and compared these traditions. His books in the local vernacular were used as readers in the mission schools, and later translated into English as *My Ngoni of Nyasaland*.

Sermons in church by Ngoni ministers not only referred to historical events which were illustrated in songs or recorded in oral traditions but to the role of the famous diviners, called prophets, 'dreamers of the head', who foretold the advent and manner of arrival of the Europeans. The Ngoni Christian leaders went further than this. They used the

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I

THE ORDEAL POISON

I. In the event of a chief's wife dying, or perhaps his child, the chief holds a consultation with the village elders, saying, "You at the village here, we wish to consult the oracle." At the "chief's" ordeal they summon all the headmen, but in the case of the "people's" ordeal, every one partakes of the poison. When they see that people are often dying they talk it over with the headmen, saying, "Look here at the village, here people are dying and we wish to summon the medicine man, that he may follow up the clue for us at the village." So they send one youth to summon the medicine man. He arrives very late in the evening. They put him in some hut, without people knowing that he has come. In the morning a young man gets up, and goes and stands at the open space in the village [where the men sit and talk, and where the different disputes are settled], and when he has climbed on an ant-hill, that all men may hear, he says, "Do you hear, you must not eat your '*nsima*' porridge to-day; he who is asleep let him arise that he may himself hear. They are saying you all must bathe, you taste a little of the beer that is not sweet, to-day."

II. He who was about to have his morning sup, pushes aside his flour against the hut wall, he begins

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754 695 791 to hide his household goods for, says he, "How do we know we shall return from there." And all their beads are taken off. When they see the sun is beginning to rise, every one assembles. And then they begin to pick out some strong young men, saying, "So and so must stay behind, and so and so, they must look after their companions and keep guard over the village, lest the medicine man's children begin to pillage the property of them who do not die." And then they begin to set out to go to the spot the poison is to be drunk at, and they [42] carry in readiness a grain mortar and a pestle (just any mortar), and follow the path in single file, and come to where the witch doctor is, and he begins to arrange them in a line; they do not turn their backs to the sun, the women spread out in one line, the men in another. The place is black with people. [292] The medicine man has his feather head-dress on, and goat's-hair bands are round his wrists. And then some old man gets up to present that for which the medicine is pounded, perhaps a goat, and this is for opening his bag [where he keeps the poison].

III. Thereupon the doctor says, "Give to me the spirit of the dead." Then that old man gets up, and going up to the village chief, tells him "The doctor is seeking the spirit of the dead." And the chief speaks, saying, "Well, and know you not them who have died here?" And then the old man gives him, the doctor, the spirit, saying, "Here so and so, and so and so have died, and it is on their account we summon you." Then the pounder of the poison says, "Give to me the partakers of human flesh who have eaten these ones you name." And then they call up two people, a man and a woman, saying, "Let her of the race of the Hills, and him of such and such a clan come here." And them they thus called come and stand near the mortar. Then

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the pounder of the ordeal poison opens his monkey-skin wallet, pulls out the poison bark, and breaks it off into the mortar with a hippo's tooth. When he is chipping it off, he does not finish all the bark he has in his hand, he chips off a little and leaves the rest. When he is doing this the bark jumps, and falls on the left, and again on the right. They surely know that here to-day wonders will befall and that men will die and women. Then the medicine man says, "Give us men to go and draw water." Then the old man asks, "How many men shall we bring?" And perhaps he says, "Bring three, because the people are many," and the doctor tells them, "You must not glance behind, but just draw the water and return." (Lest they give warning to the flesh-eaters.) When he has finished cutting down the bark, he bids his attendant "begin to pound." They do not pound the poison bark as they would grain, they pound, thud! thud! and turn the pestle in the hands. While the attendant is pounding, the pounder of the bark keeps tapping, rat, tat, tat, on the mortar, with his monkey stick [which monkeys use for digging roots], and chants—

IV. "You have heard mother of children,
Mother of children of *Kundamwa*.
Indiscriminate slaughter is the game war plays,
It slew the baboon at *Bonqwe*,
When you slay let your victims fall backward and not forward.
Bag, make the poison hear my words.
You are come into the village, you are their advocate.
They say, that here so and so and so and so have died.

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It is to plead for them you have been summoned.
There they are, she of the house of the Hills, and he of so and so's clan.
She of the Hills, it is she who has taken the basket.
He, the man, took the little sharp knife,
If it be not you, on the spot, on the spot, you must vomit,
If it be you,
Oh slay, slay, slay."

When they come with the water, the medicine man takes a water-jar full, and pours it into the mortar. You can hear the froth come foaming up, and then he draws a cup of the poison and struts about stirring it with his monkey stick, and uttering this incantation—

"Pick them out, pick them out, pick them out,
You see only the morning's sun, its rays when sinking in the west you must not see.
Are you not that one?
You went to Zombe,
You beat the drum,
It was heard in the 'Never-reach-there country' of the fly,
The spurred fly.
There is a squint-eyed lizard there.
If it were not you who beat that drum,
You must vomit.
If it were you,
You must die.

V. "You went into the regions of the air,
You captured a ray of the sun,
You likened it unto a girdle,
Saying, 'Do you be my strength,
That when the poison comes,

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You will give me the mastery over it,
I shall win,
This girdle do you sever, sever, sever.'
You swallowed the egg of a fish-eagle,
That the poison when it came might become as naught,
This egg you must smash.

'You took the spleen of a crocodile,
You laid it in your heart,
You took a python's belly,
You swallowed it, that power might be yours,
Do you [my poison bark] rend these.

'You took wax,
You smeared it on your feet,
Going in your neighbours' fields,
Going with stealthy tread to gather up his grain,
To dust off again in your own garden,
Your companions are in want,
You have wealth to overflowing.

VI. "When you see your neighbour's child,
You say, 'Why should he walk thus at large?'
But surely I had better have eaten him
He who thinks thus shall enter here [into the mortar].

"The broken gourd-cups off the grave you beat together, that they might turn into snakes.
Was it not you who sang the song, saying,
'If it be large and heavy, if it be large and heavy, if it be large and heavy,
They go about rolling it,
If it be small and light, they just lift it' [the corpse].

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Was it not you who sang so?
I seem to think I heard you.

"That little racer have you brought it now?
No, I have forgotten it [supposed answer].

"Maidan, beautiful maiden, E! E! E!
You took the arm-bones of the children of men,
You used to go and dance with them,
The squint-eyed lizard is on his seat, and
Sounding the drum,
Wheeling ever one way.
Now in the opposite direction, see they have rent the drum.

"There is a thing that walks by night,
There is something that comes by day,
It has seen him."

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VII. "No, to-day we have met each other, the boundary is there, from the east to the zenith is yours, from the zenith to the west is mine alone."' He kneels down where one of the human flesh-eaters is, he does not address the demon himself, but talks with another who is next him, and says, "My child, where did you get your black magic; did you get it that you might be all-powerful, you alone?" When he gets up he exclaims, "I have got you, you must not escape, you must go in there, in there, you must enter here" [into the mortar]. When he sees that his attendant has finished pounding the poison, he takes some water and pours it into the mortar, and stirs it, and removes the dregs and takes two gourd-cups, and fills them with the poison. The woman and the man, they are the first to drink. Then the doctor makes every one else do so. Two men drink, he draws again, and gives two women. And so on until all have partaken.

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VIII. Then the witch finder says, "That beer I had great trouble in buying, you must not waste it, no, you there, we only told you to sip it, do not you see it is a small pot." Then he knocks down the mortar with his foot, and beats together two pieces of metal. When he sees that one human flesh-eater is dead, he says he has caused the mortar to fall. Some, when dying, cry out [like a hyæna]. "Uwi, uwi"; and people know he used to transform himself into that animal; should he roar like a lion, they know he was at times that mighty beast. Others again, when dying, clench their hands. Should they clench one hand, it is known they have eaten five people; if they clench both, men know their victims have been ten. When all have vomited, he causes the survivors to jump over the path. When he sees a man has jumped, he knows that one is an ordinary person and not an eater of human flesh, and the reason the doctor knows this is because he has washed the poison with a medicine made from the "*siswiri*" mouse [and it cannot cross a path and live]. Then the medicine man says, "Let them return to the village now, where a tree has fallen you cannot hide the fall thereof." Any one who has withstood all these tests, on seeing the grass tuft on his hut, dies. When the doctor hears a man has died, he goes to the place to strip him of his cloth and cut off the belt of beads from his waist. Of them who die at the drinking-place and who are free born, their friends make some payment to the doctor, saying, father has died from the poison. Anything the dead man be a slave they burn the body. They who remained behind at the village will drink on the morrow. The pounder of the poison, on returning to his home, is given a goat, perhaps a slave whose "Let me go and bury them." Should the dead

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human flesh-eaters may have worn, the doctor takes home with him and washes his poison bark with it, that it may still retain its virtue. In the case of a man who dies from drinking the poison, his spirit is not brought back to the village, but is driven out into the bush.

II

A FUNERAL

I. When a person dies every one is told that so and so, who was ill, is "finished for." Then the village elders come together and go into his hut. They begin to bathe the body and anoint it with oil, folding the knees against the chest, and laying the palms of the hands against the cheeks, the arms being bent from the elbows. Then they take a large flat stone, set it against the hut wall, and on it place the body in a sitting position. Then they commence to wail, the women folk only are in the hut where the corpse is, the men are outside, and the children on the verandah. They lament, saying, "Alas, alas, my husband, what shall I do this day?" [The women pass the night in the hut with the dead body, the men sleep outside.] Next morning, when it is dawn, some men take their hoes, and sacrificial flour, and go to some resting-place on the wayside, and sprinkle some flour at the foot of a tree, and set out again, and when now they are drawing near the burial ground, the one who is in front picks up a stone and throws it, with the words, "We have passed." Then they commence to clear a piece of ground, and take the flour and mark out the grave.

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fire and divided out. They again sleep at the hut of the deceased. Next morning they begin to lift away any refuse. The chief mourners do this, throwing away the stuff at the cross-roads [where they set fire to them]. And then the people disperse. 765

IV. The widows live in the hut where the man died; they get up night and morning to go and utter their laments in the bush; if they meet any one, they cover their head with their calico. The chief mourners and the elders of the village now leave off cohabiting with their wives. When perhaps a month has passed, the elders make preparations for soaking the grain for beer. Previous to boiling the beer, they go to the village oracle to consult him, saying, "We are putting the beer-pots on the fire, and we are not sure if it will be successfully made with no hitch, and whether or not the people will quarrel." Then the oracle may say none of these evils will happen, telling them "the beer will be successfully made." Then they also ask, saying, "Who is she who is to set the beer on the fire?" And then the oracle consults the lots, and says, "But she of so and so's clan, it is she who shall set the beer on the fire." Next morning the beer is set on the fire, the following day it still boils, on the third day it stands off the fire, on the fourth the malt is put in. (In making beer not connected with any mourning, should it not ferment, it is allowed to stand over another day, but mourning beer, even should it not ferment well, they just go on boiling it.) On that day they summon the dance, and every one is told that the beer is ready on that evening. Then all the people collect and begin to dance. They beg some beer for "kindling the fire," and some to "pour on the drums." When they have danced some time an old man comes forth and 765 791 273 765 273

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X

THE LOTS

I. If a man be ill, his companion goes off and seeks the oracle man. He comes outside his hut and hails him, "Zikomo." The owner says, "Yes, come in here." And the man enters the hut, and says, "We have come to you that you may trace a spirit for us." Then the man takes out his lots from a little cat's-skin bag, and takes some ashes and rubs the lots with them, and begins to consult them, and says, "Are you nursing some sick person?" And he replies, "Yes, indeed, I have been attending on a sick person; the little thing that is ill is a child, and I cannot get sleep for him (lit. with him), and he will not even eat gruel, and I said, 'But I must go to the oracle man; perhaps there he may follow up for me the spirit which is causing the child to be ill.'" Then he begins to consult the lots, and says, "It is the spirit of the child's grandmother; it is she who is causing the child to be ill." And he who has come to consult the lots replies, "I have heard." And the lots again speak (through the man): "Why do you not keep me in mind, and even my grandchild, you also go without calling me to mind," but if you give the spirit a fowl take it from me, the child is sitting up; when you go and take the fowl, kneel down with it, and say, "Grandmother, there is the fowl on account of which you are taking a life" (*muntu*). Then the man who has come from the road (to consult the lots) says, "Put the spirit of mine back in the bag."

II. Then he goes home, and takes his fowl, and kneels down with it, and takes a gourd-cup of water,

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turns it out. They also trap them with a falling stone trap, and a spring trap, and others they dig for and smoke out. Mice dig out a hole, and a little farther on make a little chamber, where their nest is; farther on still is their escape exit, with just a thin layer of earth between them and the surface, so that when any one starts digging they can just burst out there. Other mice make a nest in the grass. The *Siswiri* mouse people do not eat; it cannot jump a path; if it tries to, it dies.

XII

THE WITCH-FINDER

I. When a person has died, the chief mourner goes off to seek the witch-finder. When he finds him he says, "At my home something awful has happened, and I am saying that perhaps you can follow up the thing that has killed the person." The witch-finder comes very late in the evening. When he comes, the chief mourner gives him children to lead him to the grave. When they come to the grave there, he asks them, saying, "Which way did they come with the body?" And they say they came there. And he puts medicine where they came, and asks again, saying, "Well, and his head, which direction did they lay it?" And they tell him, "His head was in this direction." He again with medicine guards the place. Then the witch-finder makes fire, and kindles it into flame, and pours medicine on it; and he does so lest people see the fire. And then they see the human flesh-eaters

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are coming; they stand a long way off, and then they call the dead man by his old name, the one he was born with, saying, "Come forth so and so." And the dead man begins to come out of the grave. Then the witch-finder says, "You must not come forth; I am your redeemer." And he returns to the bottom of his grave again. Those flesh-eaters call him again, and he would come forth, but the witch-finder again says the same. Then the human flesh-eaters say, "Who is it that is making our meat to refuse [to step forth]?" And they throw two little pieces of wood, and they turn into lions; they keep coming and clawing (the ground) and roaring, and then the witch-finder sees they are come quite close, and he takes his medicine and scatters it, and these wild beasts turn into little bits of wood, and he takes the bits of wood and puts them in his horn. They send all the wild beasts, but they effect nothing. Then they say, "Whoever can it be who is more powerful than we? Come, come, come, let us see him." Then they come, as it were there, and stand in line, and send one; say they, "Go you and dance and wriggle." And he, when he would wriggle and dance, was not able, and he comes and says, "No, no, no, I cannot dance." (The witch-finder and his fire are glimmering.) "Let another go and try, if it be you think I am lying." And the other, when he would dance, is made to fail just the same. Then the witch-finder says, "I am tired of them." And he takes his (medicine) tail and waves it, and they are dead, and he commences to identify them, saying, "That is so and so, and that so and so." And then he asks, "Well, what shall we do with them—shall we kill them, shall we leave them?" Then perhaps he whose case it is (*mwini wache*) says, "Kill them." The witch-doctor takes sharpened sticks and drives them in

6:Ratray E, G-5 (ca. 1900) 1907 FR5 Ngoni FR5

between their legs, and begins one by one, and tells him, "You, you will let three days elapse, the fourth you will die;" and tells another, "You will let four days pass, and on the fifth you die." All of them he speaks to thus. Then he takes some medicine and scatters it, and they rise and begin to run off, and the witch-finder also runs away. At the village, when they have slept three days, they hear so and so is dead, and when four days have gone they hear so and so is dead.

XIII

AN ANGONI PRAYER FOR RAIN

I. When rain does not come, they go to the man with the lots to consult them. He of the lots says, "It is the great spirit; it is she who is keeping the rain from coming." Then all the elders assemble. In the morning at dawn, an ox is taken from the kraal, and the chief stands up and says, "This ox I have given you, our ancestor, seeing that you are keeping the rain from us; give us, your children, rain; look, all men are afflicted because of you." And the elders utter a response, saying, "Hail, chief, spare us, help us, thy people." And when they are answering (thus) the ox makes water, and then people know the spirit has heard. Should it not make water, they say the spirit refused (to do as asked), and leave the ox, and go again to consult the lots. And they kill the ox, and cut off its tail, and put it in a basket, and take also the liver, and put in the basket, and these they go off to the *Kuka*

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XXVI

THE KANONOMERA DANCE

If a person is ill, they go and consult the lots, and then he of the lots says, "It is the spirit of his grandmother, it is wanting a dance; when you dance that dance, you can take it from us the child is sitting up." And they go to the village and take a basket of grain, and with it they address the spirit, saying, "There is the grain for which you are killing a person; when we have made beer, let us see the person (who is ill) sitting up." And then they assemble every one, and the day the beer is strained, they all come together, and that evening they enter the hut (where the sick person is), and begin to clap their hands to rouse the spirit, and then they see the sick one is trembling and crying out, and then the people say (to the spirit), "You must not come with war, it is we who have called you; see here at the village the drums have come, but let them depart again without anything happening to mar the dance." And when they have finished clapping their hands the dance comes forth, and the drums begin to sound, and they are dancing. He who remembers a song sings it; when one is possessed by a spirit, down he falls, and they drag him out of the dance, and deck him with calico and skins of animals, and he again enters the circle and dances. When a person is possessed by a child's spirit, they bind his calico tightly round him that it be strong, because that person is wishing to strip it off, and dance naked, as a child does not wear anything. Should a woman be seized by a man's spirit, saying, "I am so and so," they deck her with a

13:Fraser M-5 (ca. 1890)1901
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[787] [771] rising out of the lake, this was the spirit of the fathers returned. Now they had never heard before of men with white skins. But one day when they were burning the Henga villages, suddenly they came on David Livingstone and his party on their first journey of exploration on the Lake. More than once I have heard them tell how this wicked hag had cursed her enemy and said that beneath that tree the lightning would strike her, or some other terrible prediction, and there came a strange fulfilment. 795 Such curious accidents gave to witch-doctors and others a 791 dangerous power over the people. And in spite of their constant failure to bring rain, or ward off sickness and death, their reputation was kept alive by the memory of one or two ancient successes, and by playing on the terrors of the people. Unfortunately these superstitious terrors led to miserable atrocities. 695 The witch doctor was always called in to detect crime which was not patent. He brought his poison pot with him. He might accuse whom he pleased, and the only way the accused could clear himself was by drinking the poison. If he became sick and vomited then he was innocent. If he died he was guilty. When 766 a chief died his spirit was not allowed to go to the other world alone. A great fight was organised and many were killed, that they might be with him. Or the women and slaves were taken and buried alive with him in the pit.

845 The twin children and those who cut their upper teeth before 849 their lower, or any who showed any abnormality were buried alive in the sand of the river, or were cast out to the hyenas.

These atrocities are happily becoming matters of history. We 179 seldom now hear of them, and when we do, it sends a thrill of horror through many of the people.

Now a great change is coming over the people. They are the [643] only independent tribe in Central Africa, living under their own chiefs. But the old military days have passed away, and with them much of the great power of the chiefs. The old men see it, and shake their heads, but do nothing; to readjust the state. But the young chiefs, most of whom are readers and Christians, have set themselves energetically to try and remould their government. [634] Our most capable and powerful sub-chief, who is himself an elder of the church has recently established a regular hut tax, and has formed a police force. His police bring criminals to justice, enforce his judgments, prohibit the people from cutting down trees, and during slack seasons go through the villages, and where